

RGA Rules and Clarifications:

We try to conform to USGA scoring rules, but RGA members over the years have approved some changes:

- 1) Picking up at or BEFORE double par except for an **8 on par 5's** (voted on and approved at our Feb. 22, 2024 meeting.) Reminder, if you are not yet on green or unlikely to make the double par shot (or 8 on a par 5), pick up to speed up play.
- 2) For more consistent play, a gimmee on the green will be measured with the "captain's" putter - from putter head to the start of the grip. A gimmee counts as a stroke on the scorecard. Pick the ball up after declaring a gimmee. An additional note, if you decide to putt the ball (defined as actually lining up and trying to make it) AFTER it is determined to be a gimmee - and you miss, you void the gimmee, count the putted stroke and, if offered another gimmee add the gimmee stroke.
- 3) No Mulligans (aka 'do overs') unless you count them as a stroke.
- 4) Whiffing on a swing (e.g., defined as when you meant to attempt to hit the ball) count as a stroke.
- 5) Anytime a ball goes out of bounds, if you move it to put it back within two club lengths of where it was out of play and count a penalty stroke. Reminder that you should take no more than 3 minutes searching for the ball if it is out of bounds or lost. Drop another and take the penalty stroke!
- 6) If you suspect that you hit a tee shot out of bounds (e.g., wrong side of white stakes) and you play a provisional ball to avoid going back to the tee if you are OB. The provisional ball is your third stroke. If you find your ball in bounds, you play that ball as your second stroke.
- 7) You may re-tee if you flub your first shot, but your next shot is your 3rd stroke. Same as if you hit your initial shot into a pond or 'out of bounds'
- 8) Local rules apply to balls lost in hazards (e.g., drop zone).
- 9) You can roll your own ball, in your own fairway throughout the round to avoid a divot. Not in rough, not in sand traps and not in another fairway.
- 10) We have considered but decided not to adopt a "leaf rule" for balls lost in the fairway as a general rule. If necessary, this would be implemented as course conditions warrant .

How We Play:

We continue to seek to improve our speed of play. For those of us that enjoy a round of 4 ¼ to 4 ½ hours, we have opportunities to ‘do better’. Yes, playing on the weekends and unfamiliar courses will add to the challenge, but “ready golf” should be our goal. Whenever you see an entire hole open in front of you, you should pick up the pace. Several key concepts to consider:

- o one in the foursome should be getting ready to hit as another person hits and each twosome should manage the cart so both golfers are at their ball with clubs and ready to hit when it clear ahead.
- o abandon lost balls after 3 minute search
- o hit your ball before assisting your cart partner in finding their “lost” ball unless waiting for group ahead to clear.
- o if pro’s only make putts over 15 ft about 20% of the time, does it make sense to stand over every long putt for more than a few seconds?
- o pick up at twice par (but if you are off the green hitting 7 on a par 4, are you likely to ‘hole out’ to save the “honest eight”)...just pick up if you’re having a bad hole (and record double par)!.
- o remember for most of us that we are not likely to hit the green from 200+ yards to hit it before the group in front is (if you do, please do apologize and blame me!)
- o reminder that we should pick up at the shot before double par (unless it is clear you have a chance) – even if that shot is a fairway shot or a chip shot (example – if Wilbur hits his drive out of bounds on a par 4 – his third from the tee is in the rough and he does not advance it far (4) leaving a long shot to the green, his next shot (5) goes in greenside bunker, he fails to get out of bunker (6), still in bunker, he picks up, rakes the bunker, and (humbly) marks card as an 8)

This year the USGA Rules Committee made a number of significant changes “modernize” rules (their words not mine) which should help all of us speed play and improve “your golf experience”. Here are a few of the most utilized (we think):

- o Leaving the pin in for putts on the green is now OK – let’s try to keep it in until someone wants to have it removed, then leave it out until all are in or Gimme. Ball is considered “holed out” when wedged against the flag and below the lip of the cup.
- o Accidental movement of the ball on the green, in Penalty Area or while searching for a lost ball is NO PENALTY when replaced to original position.
- o Three minutes to find lost ball (PGA used to allow 5 and they usually have lot’s of help from caddies, etc).

One stroke penalty for lost ball if you drop close to where it was lost – two stroke penalty for lost ball if you relocate to fairway the same distance as where it was lost (we are going to adopt this for all RGA events what the USGA calls a ‘local rule’). You may still play a provisional ball, but not do both (e.g. if you hit a provisional, you must play that where it lies as # 3 and you cannot use the ‘local rule’ to play 3 from the fairway.)

- o Embedded ball can be dropped from fairway, rough and semi-rough – not from hazard/sand - NO PENALTY.
- o Drop is now from knee height – not shoulder height.
- o Club length is now any club EXCEPT PUTTER.
- o Your ball hitting you or your equipment accidentally is NO PENALTY.
- o Club can be grounded in PENALTY AREAS (formerly Water Hazards and marked areas – NOT SAND TRAPS) - NO PENALTY.

For a more comprehensive view of the all changes see this USGA site:

<http://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/major-changes.html>

We are open to questions or suggestions and we can certainly discuss further at after the first tournament over some beverages or in email.

GIMMEE’S... another aid in speeding up play

No doubt about it, by NOT REQUIRING putting everything out, we got faster. Will ask that one person accept this role in each pairing and PLEASE BE CONSISTENT for your group that round. Typically, “inside the leather” on a putter (not a belly putter) is “good”. This ~ 36 inches. Again, we are not trying to judge if the person WOULD MAKE IT, just an average golfer SHOULD MAKE IT. And remember laying three with a GIMMEE means you write 4 on your scorecard.

Roll the ball in the FAIRWAY ONLY

We talked about several other possible changes at the party in 2018. Everyone seemed to favor this change since not all our courses are pristine and you do get in divots, etc. We did not get a sense that (the more liberal rule of) moving the ball EVERYWHERE was considered by most to NOT BE FAIR. A bad lie in the rough should not be changed (unless ground is under repair or relief given by another USGA Rule). So hitting a fairway gets you a good lie, if not in the fairway (e.g. second cut, fringe around greens, rough, woods, hazards, sand) should you should not alter what lie you draw unless another USGA Rule provides relief.

Time for You to “Tee it Forward” (*Consider this guideline particularly if you are ‘on the mend’ from surgery or rehab!*)

One change we made in 2018 that was well received was “breaking” our relationship with age and tee distance. The USGA does not give any guidance on when you should use “senior tees”. Rather much of what I’ve read suggests you should play from a tee based upon ‘skill level’. Several different algorithms, but one simple parameter is to multiply your 5 iron distance x 36 as your ‘basis’. (Interested in more details, see this article: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/04/sports/golf/04pennington.html>).

So if you hit a “well struck shot without hook or slice” 180 yds. (and I facetiously emphasize “if”) with your 5 iron your yardage is 6480. A player that hits a 5 iron on average 160 yards is 5760. That ~ 700 yard differential is the difference between a person who should be playing from the white tees vs the gold or senior tees. Just to give you an idea, the average length for each tee for our courses are as follows:

Tee (usual color)	Blue	White	Sr/Gold	Red
Avg. Yardage for Tee	6659	6244	5635	5292
“Ideal” 5 Iron distance (yds.)	185	173	157	147
RGA Range for 2021	$\geq$ 185	166 to 184	148 to 165	$\leq$ 147

Although we would not typically “change your tee” event by event, this methodology would also ‘assist’ those dealing with some physical struggles, that we could ‘move you up’ until you are back to ‘full strength’.